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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: JULY 15, 2009

Summary: Most major dailies on Wednesday focused on the impending meeting of the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India in Sharm el Sheikh (Egypt) and reported as their lead story the meeting between the foreign secretaries of both the countries. Newspapers quoted Prime Minister Gilani as saying that "he would meet Indian Prime Minister Singh with open heart and positive mind." Reports on the repatriation (This word alludes to someone coming back to their country, I suggest simply use the word "return") of the displaced families and the "fierce clashes" between the militants and the security forces also garnered front-page coverage. All newspapers also highlighted reports that the "Punjab government withdrew its appeal against the release of Jamaatud Dawa chief on 'failure of the federal government' to provide solid evidence for putting him under house arrest."

Although local political developments dominated editorial themes, some major dailies ran editorials on the return of the IDPs to their homes. The right-wing Urdu daily, "Jasarat," declared the rehabilitation process as "a real test of the present government." The English daily, "Dawn," noted that "lasting peace in these areas requires not only that civic life be restored to what it was before the militants launched their attacks, but that the earlier position of the citizenry be improved upon." Another English daily, "The News," observed that "the Taliban are pushed back, not defeated, and ground taken has to be held." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"Gilani To Meet Singh With 'Positive Mind'" "The News" (07/15)

"Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Tuesday said he will meet Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with an open heart and positive mind. Efforts should be made to build bridges between the two countries instead of erecting walls, he said in response to questions by Indian media persons on his arrival at the Egyptian Red Sea resort regarding the much-anticipated Gilani-Manmohan meeting on July 16 on the sidelines of the NAM summit."

"Foreign Secretaries Meet In Egypt: Pakistan Hopeful Of Dialogue Resumption" "Dawn" (07/15)

"Pakistan and India appeared to be heading towards re-engagement as a crucial meeting between their Foreign Secretaries got under way in Egyptian Red Sea resort on Tuesday night. However, it was unclear if the meeting would lead to full resumption of the Composite Dialogue. 'The leadership of Pakistan is prepared to extend the

hand of friendship to India for opening a new chapter in our relations,' Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir told his Indian counterpart Shiv Shankar Menon at the start of the talks on sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit."

"Return Of IDPs To Swat, Buner Gathers Pace" "Dawn" (07/15)

"Another 589 displaced families went back to their hometowns in Swat and Buner districts on Tuesday under the government's repatriation plan. Families living with host families in Mardan had also started returning to their villages, Mardan Commissioner Khalid Khan Umarzai said."

"23 Militants Killed In Clash With Lashkar" "Dawn" (07/15)

"Twenty-three militants were killed and several others wounded in fierce clashes with a tribal Lashkar in Ambar tehsil of Mohmand tribal region on Tuesday. Official sources reported heavy exchanges of fire in Shati Maina, Kaymore, Zardalu, and Kharay Dara. They said the Lashkar had pushed militants out of mountain hideouts and destroyed their several bunkers."

"Punjab Withdraws Appeal Against JuD Chief Release" "The News" (07/15)

"The Punjab government on Tuesday withdrew its appeal against the release of Hafiz Saeed on the grounds that the federal government had failed to provide solid evidences for putting the Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) chief under house arrest."

"Fresh Offensive Launched In Buner" "Dawn" (07/15)

"Security forces launched a fresh offensive in the first headquarters of militants in the scenic valley of Gokand in Buner district on Tuesday. The district administration and police officials said the objective of the military operation was to eliminate the beleaguered militants."

"Operation In South Punjab Soon: Qureshi" "The Nation" (07/15)

"State Minister for Interior Tasnim Ahmed Qureshi has said the government will soon start search operation against the suspected militants and terrorists in Southern Punjab. He was talking to media-men in Lahore on Tuesday."

"Tank Administration Accused Of Helping Baitullah" "Dawn" (07/15)

"Turkistan Bhittani, projected by the government as leader of so-called 'good Taliban,' and the main rival of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan chief Baitullah Mehsud, has accused the local administration of helping the TTP chief get a foothold in Tank district. The administration is helping the Baitullah group to hold public meetings in the Mulazai area, Bhittani said at a conference in Dera Ismail Khan on Tuesday."

"Militant Hideouts Destroyed In Bajaur" "The News" (07/15)

"Security forces on Tuesday destroyed several militant hideouts in Charmang area in Bajaur Agency. No casualty was, however, reported in the military action, sources said."

"Taliban Destroy NATO Fuel Tanker" "Daily Times" (07/15)

"Suspected Taliban destroyed a NATO oil tanker in the Khyber Agency on Tuesday, triggering retaliatory mortar shelling that killed fifteen-year-old Shah Khan Afridi and tanker cleaner Nasir Khan Shelmani. The driver of the tanker and another resident of the area, were injured."

"CIA Planned Sending Agents To Kill Al Qaeda Leaders" "Dawn" (07/15)

"Democrats demanded a full investigation on Tuesday into a CIA program, which included sending specially trained assassins to Pakistan and other locations to capture or kill top Al Qaeda leaders. 'We need to investigate. We need to establish the facts, follow them, know exactly what happens, who gave the order, why, where did it go, where did the money come from. And I think that that's the way to go,' Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, a member of the

House Intelligence Committee, told CNN."

"Effective Exit Strategy Sought: Obama Hints At New Phase After Polls In Afghanistan" "Dawn" (07/15)

"President Barack Obama said on Tuesday 'all of us' wanted an effective exit strategy from Afghanistan in which Afghan authorities were able to take more responsibilities. Mr. Obama made the comment after talks with Netherlands Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende that centered on the current situation in Afghanistan as well as the global economy and climate change."

"Clinton To Visit India From 17th" "Dawn" (07/15)

"US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will travel to Asia from July 17 to 23, visiting India to try to deepen U.S.-Indian ties, the State Department said on Tuesday. State Department spokesman Ian Kelly ruled out the possibility of Clinton making any side trips to Afghanistan or Pakistan."

"U.S. Developing Strategy To Reduce Tensions Over Drone Attacks" "Daily Times" (07/15)

"U.S. officials are developing a new communications strategy in order to reduce tensions in the aftermath of its drone attacks in Pakistan. Aiming to bolster Islamabad's understanding of U.S. tactics, officials are planning to expand public relations initiatives in the country, according to Paul Jones, the Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia."

"Zardari, Karzai And Medvedev To Meet In Dushanbe" "Dawn" (07/15)

"The leaders of Russia, Afghanistan and Pakistan are scheduled to meet on July 29 and 30 in the Tajik capital Dushanbe in an effort to boost regional cooperation, Tajik Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Tuesday."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"The Real Test: Rehabilitation Of IDPs," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (07/15)

"After two months of displacement, the rehabilitation of people of Malakand division has finally started. During the operation, media was kept away from Swat but television footage now clearly shows that basic infrastructure has completely been destroyed during this fight. It now is a big challenge to rebuild this civilian infrastructure which is a real test of the present government as to how it handles this huge rehabilitation process."

"Return Of IDPs," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (07/15)

"Now that the IDPs have started returning to their hometowns with the government's help, it must be recognized that major challenges continue to confront both the government and the IDPs.... Meanwhile, chances of a lasting normalcy will hinge on the security situation. The army's claim that the militants have been routed in the affected areas has held so far. However, militant activity by even a handful of the remaining Taliban would be enough to spread terror and severely disrupt civic life.... Lasting peace in these areas requires not only that civic life be restored to what it was before the militants launched their attacks, but that the earlier position of the citizenry be improved upon."

"A Slow Start," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (07/15)

"Despite the failure to hit any of the targets on day one, a slow start is better than no start. A lot will depend on what the family forward-parties report back, and if they are positive then the trickle could well become a flood.... The Taliban are pushed back, not defeated, and ground taken has to be held. We hope for the sake

of the displaced that this is a journey they only have to make once."

"A Huge Challenge," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (07/15)

"This is surely good news for the entire nation and IDPs themselves who had to stay in uncomfortable makeshift camps, suffering great mental agony.... Most of the IDPs refuse to leave the camps because they say they have not been given the ATM cards. Others still are worried about security. Likewise, a great deal of infrastructure including schools, hospitals and roads, destroyed in the fight against militancy needs to be rebuilt.... Not only that. Efforts on a war footing would be required to revive the economy of the region."

"Campaign Against Madarassas?," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (07/15)

"After the Mian Channu blast Government has taken a decision to monitor religious seminaries.... The Government should certainly take action against anti-Pakistan elements, but should not defame Madaris on the pretext of terrorism."

"Madarassas As A Cover," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (07/15)

"It was not a suicide bomber who left 12 people, including seven children, dead in a village near Mian Channu on Monday.... The man who ran the seminary, Riaz Kamboh, was known to have militant links, had gone to Afghanistan for training and was arrested twice but then released. Seemingly, the Madressah he ran was teaching the Holy Quran to village boys and girls. However, the recovery of propaganda literature and suicide jackets from the debris makes it abundantly clear that he was using the Madressah as a cover for organizing a terrorist cell which brainwashed and trained young people to become terrorists and suicide bombers."

"Terror's Free Run In South Punjab," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (07/15)

"Mian Channu in Khanewal offered on Monday another glimpse into the outreach of terrorism in South Punjab.... Massive quantities of weapons discovered from the house of the teacher Riaz Kamboh - explosives, suicide jackets, rockets, etc. - clearly indicate that the man was involved in terrorism and was probably a part of the plan for future terrorist activities targeting Punjab."

"South Punjab Comes Into Limelight Again," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (07/15)

"Monday's deadliest blast that rocked Mian Channu resulting in loss of 13 precious lives including seven children has once again drawn attention to the South Punjab. It appears that the militants too wanted the Government to open more fronts as this would dilute pressure on the nerve centers of terrorism. According to reports, the blast occurred in a store of explosives and ammunition, dumped inside a house of a local teacher, raising many questions as to how a large cache including mortars and rocket launchers were smuggled into the area and for what purpose they were stored."

"Mian Channu: Tragedy That Was Waiting To Happen," an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (07/15)

"What would be the follow-up, we cannot predict with any degree of certitude, but if the past is any guide, we dare say let a week or so pass and the Mian Channu massacre would be mere statistics.... The Mian Channu tragedy also brings under focus the fact that some of the religious schools are being used as a camouflage for terrorism or, the other way round, terrorists have opened schools in the name of teaching religion. Another truth that emerges from this incident is that what we often see as the 'foreign hand' can quite possibly be our own hand."

"U.S. Aid: Some Legal Aspects," an op-ed by Ahmer Bilal Soofi in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (07/15)

"The Kerry-Lugar bill and the Berman bill are now in the process of being merged.... Both need to operate independently of each other. Otherwise, the non-fulfillment of conditions on the civilian side may inadvertently end up obstructing military supplies to Pakistan. Politically, it can become a tool to put pressure on Pakistan any time in the future.... Both the Kerry-Lugar and Berman bills when merged should result in a brief, clear and legalistic instrument that radiates optimism and goodwill and that stays focused on aid for the welfare of the people of Pakistan."

"Hard Decisions," an op-ed by Zafar Hilaly in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (07/15)

"We cannot afford to continue to live in a world of our own make-believe. As the war against the Taliban intensifies hard decisions will have to be taken which the government cannot shirk merely to pander to public opinion. What is required to win, rather than what is politically acceptable, must determine our strategy and tactics. For example, it may become necessary for our forces to cross the Durand Line and for U.S.-Afghan forces to do the same. It is after all one battlefield. A 'no safe havens' policy cannot succeed if only drones are allowed across borders.... Yet another hard decision that will have to be taken soon is the ranking of India and the Taliban on our roster of enemies. Which of the two poses a greater challenge; which poses the greater danger; and from which direction, the east or the west, is the threat more imminent? We have to decide; and it is alarming that we have not as yet."

"A Genocidal Escalation," an op-ed by Ghulam Asghar Khan in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (07/15)

"In the latest drone attacks in the tribal areas this week alone, more than 100 men, women and children were killed. Islamabad, primarily because of financial and political coercion by Washington, silently watches the violation of its sovereignty and the massacre of its citizens.... So the Af-Pak war is not a war against terrorism, or for democracy, or to help the long-suffering Afghans or the tribesmen on both sides of the Durand Line. It is an indefinite colonial war with the central aim to turn Afghanistan into a U.S. client state and ensure that Pakistan remains firmly under Washington's geopolitical strategy in the region."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)  
Patterson